

could easily be confusion in the conduct of operations even with the best organization in the world. This kind of development has happened in the course of military engagements throughout history. It is part of the “confusion of battle.”⁵

6. My point is that there is no reason to seize upon one or more incidents in the Congo operation and to regard them as dangerous precedents. In terms of future peace-keeping under the United Nations flag, the whole Congo operation will have to be studied very carefully for all of its implications – political, military and otherwise. There can be no doubt that it represents a turning point in United Nations peace-keeping but also in the future life and role of the United Nations. Accordingly, I am reluctant to see us embark on any premature or piecemeal inquest.

7. The United Nations and its members have many lessons to learn from the Congo experience. The chain of command is one element. The delegation of authority is another. The establishment of competent staff in New York and on the ground is yet another. The role of individual contingents raises a whole set of questions, not the least of which is whether national commanders should be free to send unvarnished and incomplete reports about difficult situations, both military and political. We have already had several illustrations of the misunderstanding and false impression which can be created from an ill-advised report through our military channels.

8. As for the source of the facts of the present case, I seriously question whether Washington would be any more help to us than London, Brussels, Leopoldville or New York. It seems highly possible to me that the advance on Jadotville was encouraged by United States authorities either in Washington or in the Congo. From personal experience, I can vouch for the acute degree of pressure which is exerted locally by national representatives on United Nations representatives in the field. I do not argue that we could not try to find out as much as we can about events in the Congo but I question whether at the present time we are likely to be any wiser after a canvass of views from the parties most directly concerned. At this critical time, they are bound to be biased in their description and interpretation of facts.

9. My own guess is that, as in the case of Dr. Conor Cruise O’Brien and of a number of other United Nations representatives who found themselves in the same difficulty, the situation at Jadotville last week was not so much a case of defiance of orders as one of interpreting ambiguous instructions in a way which best suited the situation on the ground as seen by the civilian and military officers there. I do not advance this as an excuse for what happened but as a practical suggestion as to how it happened. We shall not remedy the ills of this situation by holding inquests and assigning blame. We can only hope to improve peace-keeping operations in the future by learning the lessons of the past and by strengthening the machinery (our own included) available to the United Nations.

G.S. MURRAY

P.S. I make these comments because I believe that in this particular case DL(1) is getting a little beyond its own field of responsibility which is detailed liaison with DND on established peacekeeping operations. I hope that you will agree that UN Div[ision] is the proper one for assessing implications of UN conduct of affairs – especially when political considerations are very much involved. G. M[urray]

⁵ Note marginale :/Marginal note:
Yes. [Auteur inconnu/Author unknown]